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ABSTRACT

Elizabeth College has been historically a traditional liberal arts institution in the career-oriented programs of business, education, and more recently the health professions. In 1972, the faculty adopted a new nontraditional educational program primarily for adults, called the Center for Community Education. The purpose of the Center was to offer a variety of innovative programs leading toward the baccalaureate degree. A comparison of values, attitudes, and aspirations shared by the recipients of the nontraditional degrees with the graduates of the traditional program provides insight into the similarities and differences between the groups the College is attempting to serve. This analysis compares the graduates of both traditional and innovative programs regarding their backgrounds, their motivations for enrolling at the College, and the impact of the degrees on their professional aspirations. (Author/KE)

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ADULT LEARNERS AND TRADITIONAL STUDENTS
A COMPARISON OF VALUES, ATTITUDES, AND ASPIRATIONS

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ADULT LEARNERS AND TRADITIONAL STUDENTS:
A COMPARISON OF VALUES, ATTITUDES, AND ASPIRATIONS

Introduction

Elizabethtown College has been historically a traditional liberal arts institution specializing in the career-oriented programs of business, education, and more recently the health professions. In 1972, the faculty adopted a new educational program called the Center for Community Education (CCE). The purpose of the Center was to offer a variety of innovative programs specially designed for the adult population.

The Center was organized into two parts: the Campus-Free Division and the Community Relations Division. The Campus-Free Division became the degree-granting arm of the Center while the Community Relations Division engaged in non-credit continuing education programs. The purpose of the Campus-Free Division of the Center was to provide opportunities for adults to obtain college degrees who for one reason or another were unable to accomplish that goal earlier in their lives. The new program would not only take into consideration the student's previous record of traditional courses completed at the college level, but it would also grant credit toward the degree for the many nontraditional learning experiences, including work experience, in which the adult learner had been engaged.

With specific criteria and procedures approved by the Advisory Council of the Center, the first degree was awarded in March, 1973. To date 167 degrees have been awarded to qualified candidates meeting the standards of excellence established in the program. There are seven degrees available in the Center which include the Bachelor of Liberal Studies, Bachelor of Professional Studies, Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Technology, Associate of Arts, and Associate of Science, and Associate of Technology.

The success of the program stimulates some interesting questions with respect to causes that motivate the adult student to pursue a college degree, and the impact the degree has had on the recipient's personal and professional aspirations. Moreover, a study of the comparison of values, attitudes and aspirations shared by the recipients of the nontraditional degrees with the graduates of the traditional program would provide additional insight into the similarities and differences between the groups the College is attempting to serve. These issues suggested a research project involving a survey of graduates of both traditional and nontraditional programs regarding their backgrounds, their motivations for enrolling at the College, and their personal aspirations.

Research Methodology

A survey instrument was designed to measure the attitudes, values, and aspirations of the recipients of each of the two degree programs. A random selection of recent graduates from the traditional degree program was chosen to answer the questionnaire while all 167 graduates from the nontraditional degree program were asked to complete the form.

The questions on the survey instrument concentrated on assessing change on the part of the respondent which could be attributable to the person's educational experience. There were four basic areas explored by the survey: population characteristics, intellectual and skill development, personal aspirations, and affective values.

Survey Analysis

Population Characteristics

Among the respondents from the traditional program, the number of men and women were divided about equally. However, among the graduates from the nontraditional program in the Center for Community Education, there were more than

twice the number of men who responded than women. Both statistics reflect the population of enrollment by sex in each of the programs.

Table 1

Population by Sex in Percentages

	Male	Female
Traditional	48.4	51.6
CCE	72.2	27.8

Age also represents a significant difference between the two programs.

Table 2

Population by Age in Percentages

	Traditional	Center for Community Education
20-25	83.0	0.0
26-30	15.1	7.2
31-35	0.0	8.7
36-40	1.9	15.9
41-45	0.0	14.5
46-50	0.0	30.4
51-55	0.0	18.8
56-60	0.0	4.3
Over 60	0.0	0.0

While the mode of the responses from graduates in the traditional program was age 20-25, the mode for graduates from the nontraditional program was 46-50.

Since the programs are distinguished by the types of degrees offered in each, the following table reflects these differences.

Table 3

Graduates by Degrees in Percentages

	Traditional	CCE
Bachelor of Arts	26.6	0.0
Bachelor of Science	73.4	0.0
Bachelor of Professional Studies	0.0	68.8
Bachelor of Business Administration	0.0	21.3
Bachelor of Liberal Studies	0.0	0.0
Bachelor of Radiologic Technology	0.0	1.3
Bachelor of Technology	0.0	8.8

The following table illustrates the differences between the two populations with respect to the majors in which they received their degrees.

Table 4

Graduates by Major in Percentages

	Traditional	CCE
Arts and Humanities	12.6	0.0
Education	21.9	13.6
Professional		
Health Technology	4.7	2.7
Nursing	3.1	14.9
Therapy	0.0	1.4
Other Fields		
Forestry	1.6	0.0
Law Enforcement	0.0	12.2
Military Science	0.0	1.4
Other	0.0	5.4
Biological Science	7.9	0.0
Business	23.5	27.4
Physical Science	4.8	2.8
Social Science	20.4	1.4
Technical	0.0	17.6

Table 5 illustrates the distribution of the respondents by occupation.

Table 5

Population by Occupation in Percentages

	Traditional	CCE
Accountant or auditor	14.1	1.3
Business: manager or administrator	7.8	14.5
Engineer	0.0	6.6
Government official, administrator or politician	1.6	14.5
Law Enforcement officer	1.6	10.5
Military, (career)	0.0	2.6
Nurse	1.6	11.8
Teacher, professor or administrator: college, university	6.3	2.6
Teacher or administrator: elementary	10.9	2.6
Teacher or education specialist: other than above	12.5	14.5
Technician or technologist (health)	3.1	1.3
Technician or technologist (other)	6.3	1.3
Other occupation, not elsewhere classified	7.8	7.9
Unemployed	4.7	0.0
Student	12.5	0.0

An analysis of the question asking the estimates of one's 1975 income likely reflects the difference in age between the two groups. Although the graduates from the traditional group are concentrated in the lower half of the scale, it is interesting to note that the graduates from the CCE program are distributed throughout the entire scale.

Table 6

Population by 1975 Income in Percentages

	Traditional	CCE
Less than $3,000	9.4	1.3
$3,000-3,999	4.7	0.0
$4,000-5,999	6.3	5.0
$6,000-7,999	18.8	0.0
$8,000-9,999	32.8	2.5
$10,000-12,499	18.8	11.3
$12,500-14,999	6.3	22.5
$15,000-19,999	1.6	22.5
$20,000-24,999	1.6	21.3
$25,000-29,999	0.0	6.3
$30,000-34,999	0.0	1.3
$35,000-39,999	0.0	2.5
$40,000-49,999	0.0	2.5
$50,000 or more	0.0	1.3

Intellectual and Skill Development

One of the goals for education is to improve the skill and intellectual abilities of students. Thus several questions were included in the survey that attempted to measure what impact the process of obtaining the baccalaureate degree had in developing their skills with respect to their vocation, their intellectual orientation, and their ability to critically think. These were value questions and therefore, the results should not be accepted uncritically. Nevertheless, the responses provide some insight into differences and similarities with which the

graduates from the traditional and nontraditional programs viewed the benefits gained from their education.

To what extent each group felt that they had made progress or been benefited vocationally as the result of their education, the following table illustrates the similarities and differences.

Table 7

Vocational Development

On a scale 1 to 4, 1 = Very Little, 2 = Same, 3 = Quite a Bit, 4 = Very Much
X = Traditional Graduate, # = CCE Graduate

	1	2	3	4
a. Background and specialization for further education in some professional, scientific or scholarly field			X #	
b. Bases for improved social and economic status		#	X	
c. Vocabulary, terminology, and facts in various fields of knowledge		#	X	
d. Vocational training--skills and techniques directly applicable to a job		# X		

There are three elements in the data which seem to be pertinent. First, it is interesting to note that the nontraditional student saw the background and specialization for further study as more beneficial that the traditional student. Although both groups voted this the highest, the widest difference between the two groups is found in the category of "vocabulary, terminology, and facts in various fields of knowledge" probably reflecting the lack of such knowledge among the traditional students when they come to college. Interestingly, both groups rated the acquisition of skills and techniques directly applicable to the job the lowest.

The following table demonstrates the differences and similarities between the two groups with respect to the development of one's ability to critically think. It is obvious that the traditional 18-22 year old student benefited

consistently more from his education in this area than his counterpart in the CCE.

Table 8

Ability to Critically Think Development

On a scale 1 to 4, 1 = Very Little, 2 = Same, 3 = Quite a Bit, 4 = Very Much
X = Traditional Graduate, # = CCE Graduate

	1	2	3	4
a. Reasoning Ability--recognizing assumptions, making logical inferences, and reaching correct conclusions			# X	
b. Ability to see relationships, similarities, and differences between ideas			# X	
c. Understanding the nature of science, experimentation, and theory			#X	
d. Skepticism--ability to withhold judgment, raise questions, and examine contrary views			# X	
e. Quantitative thinking--understanding concepts of probability, proportion, margin of error, etc.			#	

Along similar lines but asking the question somewhat differently, Table 9 illustrates what each of the two groups view how their orientation for critical thinking changed as a result of their college education.

Table 9

Orientation for Critical Thinking

On a scale 1 to 4, 1 = Very Little, 2 = Some, 3 = Quite a Bit, 4 = Very Much
X = Traditional Graduate, # = CCE Graduate

	1	2	3	4
a. Enjoy solving long complex problems		X#		
b. Enjoy detecting faulty reasoning			# X	
c. Enjoy searching for systematic relationships even when a solution is not immediately apparent		X #		
d. Enjoy examining contrary views			X#	
e. Think about the accuracy of information I receive				#X
f. Withhold my opinion until careful consideration of the facts and opposing opinions			# X	
g. Examine statements critically			# X	
h. Question people when they present new ideas			#X	
i. Like to contemplate the future of society			# X	
j. Argue different sides of an issue			#X	
k. Recognize the assumptions behind an argument			# X	
l. Like to seek the best possible answer even if it takes quite a long time			X#	
m. Enjoy discovering new problems to think about		X	#	

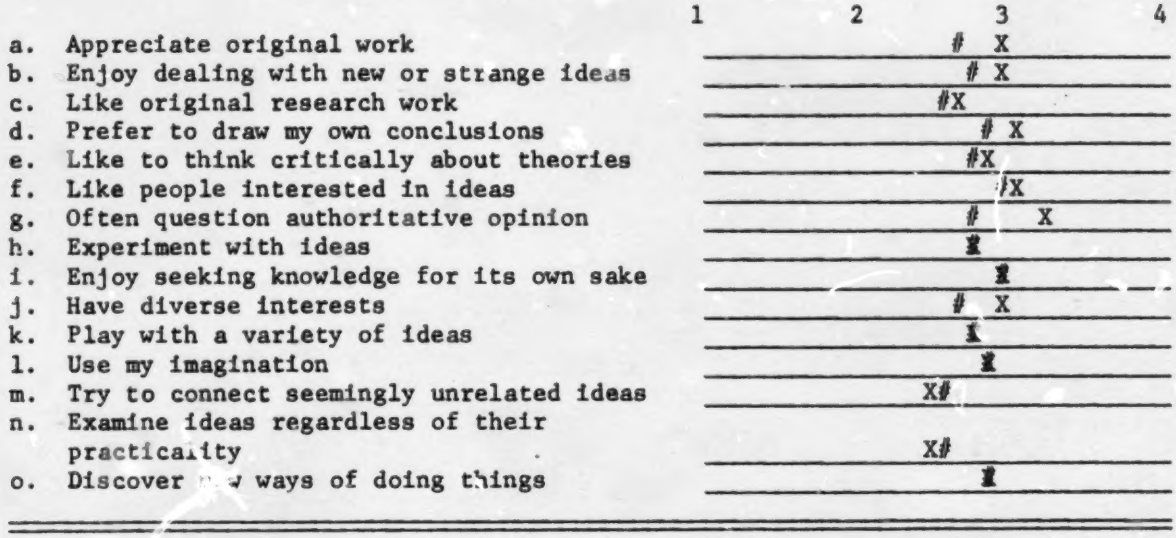
Interestingly, there is little difference between the two groups except for the item, "Enjoy discovering new problems to think about." In this category, the traditional student felt he had changed less than in the other responses.

Table 10 illustrates the extent to which the graduate's education affected his intellectual orientation. Once again there seemed to be little difference between the two groups.

Table 10

Intellectual Orientation

On a scale of 1 to 4, 1 = Very Little, 2 = Same, 3 = Quite a Bit, 4 = Very Much
X = Traditional Graduate, # = CCE Graduate


1
2
3
4
a. Appreciate original work
b. Enjoy dealing with new or strange ideas
c. Like original research work
d. Prefer to draw my own conclusions
e. Like to think critically about theories
f. Like people interested in ideas
g. Often question authoritative opinion
h. Experiment with ideas
i. Enjoy seeking knowledge for its own sake
j. Have diverse interests
k. Play with a variety of ideas
l. Use my imagination
m. Try to connect seemingly unrelated ideas
n. Examine ideas regardless of their practicality
o. Discover new ways of doing things

In regard to the effect their education had on change with respect to their orientation for scientific thinking, it seems that they were least affected by their education in this regard. Although there was little difference in comparing the two groups in this question it is interesting to note that the average numerical value of this item was significantly lower when comparing it with the average numerical values of other questions requiring similar responses.

Table 11

Orientation for Scientific Thinking

On a scale of 1 to 4, 1 = Very Little, 2 = Same, 3 = Quite a Bit, 4 = Very Much
X = Traditional Graduate, # = CCF Graduate

	1	2	3	4
a. Enjoy science and mathematics		# X		
b. Enjoy discovering how things work			# X	
c. Looking at scientific displays		# X		
d. Solving puzzles		#X		
e. Like to formulate my own hypothesis about things			X#	
f. Like to take things apart to see how they work		X #		
g. Like to conduct my own experiments		X#		
h. Enjoy observing things and thinking about how they work or occur			X#	

Affective Values

One of the important outputs of a college education is the acquisition of human values and a deeper appreciation for life and its meaning. In an attempt to evaluate the impact their education had on this matter, two questions were asked.

First, Table 12 illustrates to what extent the persons of each of the two groups felt that they had been benefited humanistically as the result of their education. It is interesting to note that the most significant difference between the two groups is in the item, "Awareness of different philosophies, cultures, and ways of life," demonstrating that the traditional student had benefited "quite a bit" while the nontraditional student benefited only some.

Table 12

Humanistic Development

On a scale of 1 to 4, 1 = Very Little, 2 = Same, 3 = Quite a Bit, 4 = Very Much
X = Traditional Graduate, # = CCE Graduate

	1	2	3	4
a. Awareness of different philosophies, cultures, and ways of life			# X	
b. Broadened literary acquaintance and appreciation			# X	
c. Aesthetic sensitivity--appreciation and enjoyment of art, music, drama		# X		
d. Writing and speaking--clear correct, effective communication			X #	

With regard to the question of how the graduates had been benefited by their education in their human relationships, it is quite apparent that that residential aspect of the traditional students' education influenced them a great deal. The nature of the nontraditional program unfortunately does not offer that kind of opportunity and thus justifies the differences in response to the items in the question.

Table 13

Development of Human Relationships

On a scale of 1 to 4, 1 = Very Little, 2 = Same, 3 = Quite a Bit, 4 = Very Much
X = Traditional Graduate, # = CCE Graduate

	1	2	3	4
a. Personal Development--understanding one's abilities and limitations, interests, and standards of behavior			# X	
b. Development of friendships and loyalties of lasting value		#	X	
c. Appreciation of individuality and independence of thought and action			# X	
d. Social development--experience and skill in relating to people			# X	
e. Tolerance and understanding of other people and their views			# X	
f. Appreciation of religion--moral and ethical standards			X #	

Personal Aspirations

There was little difference between the traditional and CCE graduates with respect to whether they had taken any additional course work since leaving Elizabethtown College. Half of each group responded in the negative while a few more resident students indicated they had taken work at a graduate school than did the Center for Community Education graduates. The following table shows the breakdown.

Table 14

Additional Course Work by Percent

	Traditional	CCE
None	50.8	50.0
Junior or Community College	1.7	2.7
Undergraduate School	3.4	6.8
Graduate School	40.6	37.5

With respect to their current status in relationship to the graduates' interest in pursuing graduate study, it is interesting to note that a larger percentage of nontraditional students were presently enrolled in a graduate program than among the traditional students. Table 15 illustrates the current status of the respondents with respect to graduate school plans.

Table 15

Current Status in Graduate School by Percent

	Traditional	CCE
Presently enrolled in graduate degree program	28.8	30.1
Accepted in graduate degree program and plan to begin shortly	0.0	1.4
Applied to graduate degree program	28.8	24.7
Not Interested	42.4	43.8

Table 16 shows among those who had indicated any interest in pursuing graduate studies, which degrees they were seeking.

Table 16

Degrees Sought by Percent

	Traditional	CCE
Master of Arts	13.8	20.5
Master of Science	20.7	20.5
Master of Education	27.6	33.3
Professional Degree	24.1	15.4
Doctorate	0.0	0.0
Other	13.8	10.3

Another question regarding personal aspirations in which there could have been an expectation of difference between the two groups was: "To what extent do you believe your having the baccalaureate degree has improved your eligibility for promotion and an increase in salary with your employer?" Interestingly enough, there was no difference at all. On a scale of one to four representing "not at all," "somehwat," "much improved," and "very much improved," each group averaged evenly on the scale at 2.3 for both questions of promotion and salary increase.

Table 17 illustrates a comparison of the two groups on the question of how their goals and aspirations have changed as a result of their educational experience at Elizabethtown College.

Table 17

Changes in Personal Life Goals and Aspirations

On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 = Much Less Important, 2 = Somewhat Less Important, 3 = No Change, 4 = Somewhat More Important, 5 = Much More Important

X = Traditional Graduate, # = CCE Graduate

	1	2	3	4	5
a. Becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts			#X		
b. Becoming an authority in my field				X #	
c. Obtaining recognition from my colleagues for contributions to my special field				#	
d. Influencing the political structure			X#		
e. Influencing social values				#	
f. Raising a family			X	#	
g. Having administrative responsibility for the work of others				X	#
h. Being very well off financially				X	#
i. Helping others who are in difficulty					X#
j. Making a theoretical contribution to science			X	#	
k. Writing original works (poems, novels, short stories, etc.)			#		
l. Creating artistic work			#X		
m. Being successful in a business of my own			#		
n. Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment				#	X
o. Developing a meaningful philosophy of life					X#
p. Participating in a community action program				#X	
q. Keeping up to date with political affairs				X#	
r. Pursuing a graduate degree				X	#

There are several factors that are worth noting on this table. First, the greatest change for both groups was in regard to "developing a meaningful philosophy of life." Second, the one item reflecting the least change for both groups was "writing original work (poems, novels, short stories, etc.)." The most significant difference between the two groups was found in the item, "having administrative responsibility for the work of others." While the non-traditional graduate averaged just above "somewhat more important," the traditional

graduate averaged between "no change" and "somewhat more important." The one item which indicated a change but in the direction of less importance was "becoming accomplished in one of the performing arts."

Summary

The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education has predicted that there will be substantial shift in the age of the degree-seeking population during the last quarter of this century. We have been assimilating data on the traditional college-age student in recent years with respect to his values, attitudes, and aspirational goals. We have very little data on the new adult population now desiring to complete their education and to obtain the credentials recognizing what they have learned over the years.

The benefit of this study to educators interested in exploring educational program options for adults rests largely on the actual experience of an institution which decided to engage in this activity. The study attempts to analyze the differences and similarities in attitudes and aspirations of two different types of learning populations.

For a college which has been accustomed to teaching one kind of student introducing a different learning population into the campus environment tends to generate new problems and, indeed, conflicting pressures within a campus community. Administrators need to know more about the new population in order that they can educate the faculty to better understand the new adult learners and thus adjust to meet their special needs.